

School Committee Meeting Minutes  
Lura A. White School  
November 25, 2003

Present: Donald Parker, Chairperson  
Bob Prescott  
Hugh Muffoletto  
Gary Bourassa  
Paul Wilson

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent  
Thomas Walsh, SPED Director  
Patricia Stern, Business Manager  
Sharon DiPasquale  
Michael Smith, FinCom  
Joseph Deguglielmo, DEAC

Meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m.

Public Participation:

As there was no public participation the meeting moved to discuss old business.

Gary Bourassa motioned to approve the minutes of October 28, 2003. Hugh Muffoletto seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Sharon DiPasquale, Behavior Intervention Specialist at the Shirley Middle School, briefed the committee members on the Mentor Program and the Peer Mediation Program.

The Peer Mediation Program is a grant that Mrs. DiPasquale wrote for last year and was awarded over the summer. It is through the Attorney General's office and is a model that has been used statewide since 1980's. The AG's office funds half of the program costs and the other half was funded through community and charitable foundation contributions.

Students are trained in the process of conflict resolution, mediation and confidentiality by a Peer Mediation Coordinator, Charlene Houston. Mrs. Houston works approximately 2 days a week (or 16 hours) at no cost to the school district. She will coordinate the program and the 20 hours of training that each student mediator will receive. Student mediator candidates can be referred by teachers or students and applications will be reviewed and interviews will take place. The ideal mediation group will contain a cross-section of the student body, primarily focusing on grades 6 and 7. Mrs. DiPasquale has February 2004 as a target start date for peer mediations to begin. She has noted that this program is self-funding with no costs associated with the program, including Mrs. Houston's services, are to be paid from the school district.

Mrs. DiPasquale briefed the committee members on the Mentor program as well. She has met with Jim Farnsworth, Deb Delaite and the Superintendent of MCI about running the mentor program. Well over a dozen community members have expressed interest in becoming a mentor. After three to four hours of training and a CORI check, these mentors will be screened so as to match them with the appropriate students. Mrs. DiPasquale plans to have information about this program available for the Open House scheduled for December 4.

Another program that she is involved with is the "75% Officer". This grant will allow a police officer to be present in the school throughout the school year and at the police station during the summer months. It looks as if Shirley School District has a good chance of obtaining this grant which would allow this program to begin in the fall.

The Board of Selectmen has put the School Committee on their agenda for December 8. The purpose for this meeting will be to introduce the School Committee members to the BOS and establish a regular dialog between the two as well as to increase communication. The School Committee will cancel their meeting for December 9 and instead hold its meeting on December 8, 2003 at 6:30 p.m., prior to the BOS meeting at 8 p.m.

The State has sent out another memo regarding the SPED Circuit Breaker rate. The rate, which was originally to be 75% but changed to 27%, has now been increased to 35%. The memo also stated that this rate could possibly change again.

Patricia Stern, Business Manager, reviewed Payables Warrants 421 & 423 and Payroll 317. Mrs. Stern updated the year-end closing of the FY03 books. Due to the opening of the middle school and all that it entailed as well as the departure of the town accountant she has had to put the closeout on hold. She plans to have them closed out very soon and will then move on to the End-of Year report and then the FY04 & FY05 books.

The Use of School Building and Grounds Policy was reviewed. There were some minor changes and additions to the policy. A rental fee was incorporated as well as a policy requiring proper footwear and no beverages in the gym. The committee would like to establish a policy or penalty for those organizations that do not follow the new policy. They also wanted to look into having someone on staff to be responsible for the overseeing of the rules. It was mentioned that a notice should be placed at the gymnasiums as well as in the local papers notifying residents of the new rules. Mrs. Stern and Dr. Scott felt that the custodial staff would not be able to do their job properly if they had to also be responsible for overseeing the various organizations using the facilities. Members thought that perhaps responsibility should fall on the organizations themselves to monitor those parents and students in attendance. A custodian could be on hand at the end of the allotted time with a checklist of items to review prior to the organizations departure. Dr. Scott feels that if the School Administration draws up a procedure regarding penalties, that the School Committee would be willing to stand behind the decision to prohibit or fine should there be any complaints. The committee agreed.

All organizations that would utilize any facility should have its own liability insurance. If not, then they should require a waiver of liability for all people within their organization. By require insurance there was concern that this might drive away the smaller groups that might be interested. Perhaps Groton and Littleton could be contacted to find out about their policies. In order for revisions to be approved two readings need to be done. Paul Wilson motioned the first reading. Gary Bourassa seconded. Motion approved.

FY05 Budget preparation schedule was discussed. In the process of review it was decided to eliminate the December 23, 2003 meeting. Staffing information scheduled to be discussed at that meeting would be moved to February, 2004. Final budget should be ready for review in April 2004. It was mentioned that any grant information or other sources of revenue should be discussed with the public prior to the budget approval.

Mike Smith reviewed the FinCom Budget Variation Approval Process. The committee is looking for advance notice should there be a need to do a reserve transfer. Too many transfers, not necessarily from the school, have come to FinCom's attention after the overage has occurred.

A letter from Emily Nugent brought to the attention of the committee that there was no nurse present at Devens for several days. There is a student who has a medical condition that requires that a nurse be present at all times. The committee would like to put this issue on the agenda for next meeting so that the school department can respond to the letter. Dr. Scott would like to have Lonnie Ouellette, Director of Early Learning, address the committee.

Temporary occupancy of the Shirley Middle School was discussed. Electrical work in the Ed Tech room still needs to be signed off on by the electrical inspector. Some areas of the auditorium fire wall were not inspected prior to it being put up. If these areas were not done correctly it may require demolition of the walls to get in and repair it. This could hold up the auditorium for some time.

DEAC is meeting to consider all educational options for the residents of Devens. After 2006 Devens needs to have a plan in place as to how they are going to educate their children. Three communities surrounding Devens, Shirley, Ayer and Harvard have expressed interest in educating these students. The DEAC has looked at various options, including regionalization and establishing a charter school. No decisions will be made immediately.

Gary Bourassa expressed concern about the aquarium visit to the school. He will review the response from Sylvia Jordan.

The members voted to go into executive session to discuss Dr. Scott's evaluation.

The Roll Call was as follows:

Donald Parker, "yes".

Bob Prescott, "yes".

Hugh Muffoletto, "yes".

Gary Bourassa, "yes".

Paul Wilson, "yes".

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Submitted by: Karen Gutheil